Psychosocial and Work-Related Adaptation of Soviet Jewish Refugees in Maryland

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to understand the experience of acculturation of refugees from the Former Soviet Union (FSU), and learn about their adaptation in resettlement, including psychological adjustment and economic/employment adaptation. This study was conducted in 2000-2001 by a University of Maryland Research team (Birman & Trickett), under contract with the Maryland Office for New Americans, Maryland State Department of Human Services**.** The findings of the study are presented below.

Demographics

- *Who was sampled in this study and what are their demographic characteristics?*

All 453 refugees in this study had arrived when they were between the ages of 25 and 55, with the average being 41. They had come to the U.S. as refugees or parolees between 1989 and 2000, and lived in the two largest communities of resettlement in Maryland, with 251 having been resettled in Baltimore, and 202 in Montgomery County. We are reasonably certain that the sample is representative of refugees from FSU resettled in the two communities.

The majority of arrivals came from Ukraine (43%), 28% from Russia, 15% from Belarus, and the rest from other former republics. More refugees resettled in Baltimore were from Ukraine and Belarus, and more of those resettled in Montgomery County were from Russia.

The average length of residence in the U.S. was 6 years. To form "cohorts of arrival," the sample was divided into 3 groups, selecting those who were resettled 8-11 years ago, 4-6 years ago, and less than 2 years ago. These three groups were then compared on a number of variables. **There were no differences in the level of education between the three cohorts**, in contradiction to the currently held belief among service providers that more recent arrivals are less well educated than those who had come earlier.

This is a very educated group of adults in both communities, with 62% having completed college, 7% holding a Candidate or Doctoral degree, and 22% having graduated from a technical school ("tekhnikum") in FSU. **The Montgomery County refugees were slightly better educated as a group**, with 67 % (vs. 58% in Baltimore) having an equivalent of a college degree, and 10% (vs. 4% in Baltimore) having an equivalent of a Doctorate.

Acculturation

- ***How are these refugees acculturating to the American culture, and to what extent do they maintain acculturation/affiliation to Russian culture?***

Acculturation to the American culture increases for refugees over time (with respect to language, identity, and behavior), and **acculturation to the Russian culture declines only slightly**. Thus, adult refugees don't lose their attachment to Russian culture as quickly as they acquire American culture. It is important that service providers recognize the strength of this attachment to Russian culture in providing services even for those resettled much earlier.

Refugees in Montgomery County are more acculturated to American culture than are refugees in Baltimore.

Residents of the two communities were equivalent in Russian language competence and Russian identity. Baltimore refugees engage more frequently in activities and that involve Russian culture (e.g. Russian restaurants, stores, etc.), reflecting the fact that those settings are more prevalent in Baltimore where there is a larger former Soviet community.

Jewish Acculturation

- ***To what extent do these refugees identify themselves as being Jewish and participate in Jewish religious activities?***

A large number of the Soviet Jewish refugees in the sample, 19%, do not consider themselves Jewish, and this percentage is even higher (25%) among those who arrived within the last 2 years. Presumably, those who do not consider themselves Jewish but have a Jewish spouse. This confirms the anecdotal impression of resettlement workers who have observed an increase in the number of mixed marriages.

For those who DO consider themselves Jewish, their Jewish identity is quite strong, and, in fact, is stronger than their Russian identity. However, their reasons for considering themselves Jewish are primarily NOT religious, with only 2% citing religion alone as the reason. Rather, for most this identification reflects either ethnicity/national origin, or a combination of reasons that may include religion. Thus is it very important for resettlement agencies to appreciate that while Jews from the FSU may not be religious, and may appear to be culturally Russian, their Jewish identity is extremely strong.

There were no differences in Jewish identity or Jewish religious participation in Montgomery County and Baltimore.

Social Integration

- ***To what extent are these refugees socializing with Americans and other Russian-speaking émigrés?***

The overwhelming majority of close personal relationships among the refugees are with other former Soviets (over 80%), and this percentage does not appear to decline even after 8-11 years of residence in the country. The percentage of Americans in close social networks increases slightly (from 10 to 15%). Thus resettlement agencies might consider drawing on fellow refugees in providing services as they play an important role in the refugees' lives.

Refugees in Montgomery County reported having more Americans (17% vs. 12% in Baltimore) and fewer former Soviets (76% vs. 84% in Baltimore) in their close social networks.

Social Support

- ***Who are the people in the lives of these refugees to whom they feel they can turn for social support?***

Refugees receive much more support from family and Russian friends than from other sources, and the amount of support from American friends remains small even for those who've lived in U.S. longer.

Refugees report receiving increasing amounts of support from both Russian and American friends with length of time in the U.S., which suggests that regardless of cultural group, friendships grow stronger over time.

Montgomery County residents find their American friends to be more supportive than do refugees in Baltimore, again highlighting that refugees living in a community where there are fewer fellow refugees and where they are more geographically dispersed are more likely to integrate more into American culture. Further, Baltimore residents rated their spouse as being more supportive than residents of Montgomery County, suggesting a greater reliance on close family in that community.

Psychological Adjustment

- ***How are refugees adapting psychologically in resettlement with respect to satisfaction with life, alienation from American culture, and psychological symptoms of depression and anxiety?***

It appears that the refugees are adjusting relatively well psychologically in the sense of being free of symptoms of psychological distress, satisfied with life, and reporting a low level of alienation from life in the U.S. However, there of course is considerable variability among them in terms of these psychological outcomes.

Higher life satisfaction was predicted by currently having a high status job, high acculturation to American culture, being married, and having been satisfied with the assistance received from resettlement agency when they first arrived. These were the findings from multivariate analyses where the contribution of each factor was examined when

the effects of all other factors were held constant.
Alienation was predicted by high acculturation to Russian culture, which is not surprising, since those who are attached to Russian culture may feel less comfortable in American culture.

Women appear to be more at risk than men for both alienation and psychological symptoms (of anxiety and depression). This confirms findings with a range of different populations where women are found to be more likely to express symptoms of distress than men. These findings may be due to the fact that women are more likely than men to express (admit to) distress, or that they indeed experience greater levels of distress.

Both alienation and psychological distress appear to INCREASE with length of residence in the U.S., when the effects of other variables (education, age, gender, acculturation, etc.) have been accounted for. This could be due to the fact that psychological distress and alienation set in at later stages of the resettlement process, when much of the coping with the initial demands of resettlement is out of the way; or the possibility that refugees are more likely to admit to alienation and distress the longer they've lived in the U.S. The resettlement system needs to appreciate the possibility that for some refugees psychological distress and alienation may INCREASE with time in U.S., making it important to have programs to assist them at later stages of the resettlement process.

The higher the status of job held in FSU, the more likely are refugees to be at risk for reporting symptoms of psychological distress. These findings suggest that resettlement agencies need to attend to the special needs of refugees who were high-level professionals in their country of origin, as they may be at risk for psychological distress.

Economic Adjustment

- *How are the refugees adjusting with respect to employment?*
- *What are the employment trajectories for the refugees as a group and in the two different communities?*

The discrepancy in job status for refugees between the job they held in FSU and their current job is dramatic. Using a Socioeconomic Index (SEI, with 100 representing the highest job status possible with respect to prestige, income, and level of education required for the job) the average SEI rating of the jobs held before immigration was 73, compared to an average of 50 for current jobs held in the U.S**.** The score of 73 would include would include such professions as librarian, forestry scientist, manager in health, and manager in marketing in the U.S. An SEI score of 50 would include positions such as physician's assistant, health technician, and recreation worker.

Almost half of the refugees report the status of their current job to be worse than that held in the former Soviet Union and only 25% have been able to find employment in their field. However, as a group refugees are somewhat satisfied with their current job.

Both status and satisfaction with job held appear to improve with length of residence in the U.S. However, a large number of refugees have still not attained high satisfaction or comparable

status to the job they had had in the FSU even after 8 years in the U.S. Thus, refugees continue to have needs with respect to job placement and re-training for a long time following resettlement.

Russian friends play an important role in helping refugees find work, with 27% indicating that they found their first job through Russian friends, and 22% indicating same for the 6th job. In addition, as refugees move through jobs the majority (ranging from 56 to 71%) work in organizations where other former Soviets are employed. The role of American friends is small and increases only slightly as refugees move through jobs. Thus at least to some extent occupational achievement for these refugees involves relying on their ethnic networks, rather than becoming more involved with Americans.

The role of the resettlement agency in helping refugees find jobs declines over time, with those indicating they found work through the resettlement agency declining from 41% for job #1 to 0% by job #5. Instead, by job #6 67% of refugees report relying no themselves or the newspaper in finding work.

In predicting higher status of current job, higher level of education in FSU, earlier age of arrival, and English language competence emerged as significant factors contributing to higher SEI.

Refuges in Baltimore as a group hold lower status jobs (SEI code) than refugees in Montgomery County, even when taking other variables into account such as level of education, age of arrival, English language competence, etc. **Baltimore refugees start out in lower level positions and do not progress as quickly or end up in positions that are as high status as in Montgomery County.**

The socioeconomic index (SEI) of the first job held was an important predictor of current SEI code, controlling for other possible factors such as level of education, community of residence, English language competence, and status of job in the former Soviet Union. This suggests that when agencies place refugees in jobs upon arrival, it is important to try to place them in as high a status as job as possible. The belief that the first job is irrelevant, and is just a temporary stepping-stone to higher occupational success is not altogether correct.

Length of residence in the U.S. also predicted higher status of job currently held, suggesting that even those who start in lower status jobs are able to move up somewhat over time.

Taken together, these results point to the importance of helping refugees obtain as high a level job as possible upon arrival, continuing strong efforts at English language training, and reassuring them that over time the economic situation does improve. However, it is also important to note that in this as well as other studies, approximately 1/3 of the respondents indicate that their current employment situation is worse than what they had in the former Soviet Union and very few are able to find employment exactly comparable to what they had before. Finally, it is important explore why refugees in Montgomery County appear more successful at employment than refugees in Baltimore.

Additional Education and Training

- *What kinds of education and training did refugees receive after resettlement in the U.S., and did they find it helpful in finding employment?*

Re-training in a new specialty is very important for economic adjustment of the refugees, with almost 1/3 of the sample having received such additional courses, most in programming and computers. **The majority (62%) of those who retrained found it helpful in finding work.** Thus, it is important for resettlement services to consider offering such courses or finding ways of directing refugees to such courses.

English language classes were attended by the vast majority of the refugees (91%) and were found to be extremely helpful, suggesting that this is an extremely important and effective component of the resettlement program.

Those who attended job club were predominantly from Montgomery County, presumably job club having been available only rarely in Baltimore, and those who attended it there found it more useful than in Baltimore. This may be an important component to include in services offered to new arrivals.

Resettlement Agency Experience

- ***How do the refugees describe and rate their satisfaction with the resettlement agencies?***

Refugees reported that they were treated well by the resettlement agency staff (a rating of 3.9 on a 5 point scale, roughly equivalent to a grade of "B").

Refugees rate the services they received upon resettlement as somewhat helpful (3.2 on a 5-point scale, closer to a grade of "C"). Only in two areas -- assistance with obtaining food stamps and studying English – the agencies were rated as better than that (greater than 3.5 on a 5-point scale). This suggests that agencies can explore ways to improve assistance for these refugees.

Refugees in Montgomery County were significantly more satisfied with the helpfulness of the services received and the way they were treated by the resettlement agency staff than in Baltimore. It is impossible to determine whether this difference reflects a "real" difference in the type and style of services delivered, or if the tendency of the population in Baltimore, who appear not to be adjusting as well as refugees in Montgomery County, to rate all aspects of resettlement more negatively.

Conclusion:

The most important aspect of the findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

- **Refugees encounter many difficulties in finding employment that is comparable in status to what they had in FSU, and the first job held is important in predicting later economic adaptation.**

- **The employment sphere is extremely important for psychological adjustment of the refugees, with those holding higher status positions in FSU being particularly at risk for psychological distress.**

- **The finding that alienation and psychological symptoms of distress may increase with time in U.S., suggests the need to address those issue for refugees who've been in the country a while.**

- **Ethnic networks are extremely important in the lives of these refugees, including social life and finding employment, even after living in U.S. for as long as 8-11 years.**

- **There are dramatic differences in acculturation and economic adaptation in the two communities. Living within a larger refugee community in Baltimore, refugees there are not acculturating as much to the American culture and remain more attached to Russian culture. Economic/employment adjustment in Montgomery County appears better than in Baltimore, even when differences in age of arrival, English language competence, and level of education are taken into account.**

These findings will serve as the bases for our continued work on trying to understand the economic, psychological, and social adaptation of refugees from the former Soviet Union. One of the serious limitations of this study is that we were not able to actually follow refugees over time, but were only able to compare those who arrived earlier with more recent arrivals. To achieve this, we plan to return to the same people interviewed next year, 2 years after the original questionnaire was administered, in order to see how their lives have progressed in 2 years.

In addition, in 2001 we will be returning to some of the families to ask some more specific questions about employment issues. In particular, we want to understand better the differences between the two communities and the particular successful or not successful strategies refugees may have taken with respect to employment.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the researchers. Although we have moved to Chicago since we started this project, we are continuing to work on this study with a research team at the University of Maryland. Our contact information is as follows:

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

There has been a resurgence of immigration in the United States since the 1965 Immigration Act. By the end of 1990, 7.9% of the whole population was foreign born and immigration flow accounted for 33.1% of the population change in the decade (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1993). In addition, the 1990 Immigration Act permits the entry of an additional 150,000 legal immigrants annually, contributing to a steadily growing immigrant flow in the 1990s and beyond.

Maryland has provided resettlement for large numbers of refugees in recent years, particularly those from the former USSR, Vietnam and Africa. The Maryland Office for New Americans (MONA) has been responsible for aiding the adjustment of newly arrived refugees in Maryland through providing refugees with cash and medical assistance, employment services, and language training. Refugees are also eligible for federal public programs such as SSI, Medicaid, Medicare, and TANF. While the intention of all these programs is to enable refugees to integrate in the host society successfully as soon as possible, after refugees leave the resettlement system it has been difficult to track their longer-term progress in their new country. Past research done in other parts of the country has documented signs of long-term dependency and social isolation among some refugees (e.g., Hmong and Cambodians). However, the longer-term adaptation of varying refugee groups has not been extensively studied. Such information should prove useful in evaluating the long-term success of existing efforts and in enhancing the services provided upon resettlement, so that both immediate and longer-term needs of the refugee population can be addressed.

In response to this situation, MONA has begun a series of longitudinal studies designed to provide relevant information on the psychological and economic adaptation of refugees it has resettled in prior years. This report focuses on the first year of this project dealing with the adaptation of working age Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union. Subsequent reports will focus on Somali and Vietnamese refugees. The report begins with a brief overview of relevant literature on this population, highlighting how little is known about their overall well-being in the United States. Following this, the methodology, measures, and findings of the project are reported. The report ends with a summary of the most important findings and their implications for the resettlement process.

Soviet Jews In The United States

Immigrants to the U.S. from the former Soviet Union (FSU), primarily Jews receiving refugee status, have numbered over 400,000 since the early 1970's (L. Gordon, Immigration and Naturalization Service, personal communication, 1999). The primary reason for their emigration was to escape the personal and institutional anti-Semitism in the former Soviet Union (Gold, 1992). There they were ethnic minorities who were not considered to be ethnically "Russian" but were officially registered as having a Jewish "nationality" (see Birman, 1994). However, the native language and culture of all Soviet Jews were Russian. Thus, the best term to use to refer

to this population is "Soviet Jewish refugees", with the term "Russian" referring to their language and culture.

Soviet Jewish refugees might be expected to assimilate easily in the United States. They have many advantages compared to other refugee groups. While refugees from the FSU were fleeing conditions of both overt and subtle discrimination against them as ethnic Jews, there was no recent history of violence against them, as compared to those fleeing war-torn situations such as Bosnia or Somalia. Thus, there are no after-effects of trauma that may impede refugees in adaptation in resettlement. In addition, a unique aspect of their experience has been the fact that the U.S. Jewish community has concentrated tremendous resources to aid them in their resettlement. Moreover, the existing social service infrastructure of the Jewish community helped make a large number of services available. Included among them are interest free loans, donated memberships to local Jewish Community Centers, free tuition for children to attend private Jewish schools, access to summer camps for children at reduced fees, and large social networks of professionals and others willing to aid with various aspects of resettlement and many others.

Further, Soviet Jewish refugees are highly educated, with the majority possessing a college degree (Birman & Tyler, 1994; Gold, 1992) and having been employed in professional occupations prior to migration (Simon & Simon, 1982a). In addition, a unique aspect of this population is that women are as likely to be highly educated and employed as men, making a 2-earner family the norm. In addition, small family size, with average number of children being less than 2, creates greater resources in families. Finally, Soviet Jewish refugees have another advantages over some of the other refugee groups -- because they are white, they have the opportunity to shed the minority status they had in their country of origin and blend into the mainstream in the U.S. in a way not clearly available to non-white immigrants or ethnic minorities (Hurh & Kim, 1983; Rumbaut, 1994). As a result, a study of adaptation of this group can be seen as an analysis of resettlement under some of the best possible circumstances.

However, Soviet Jewish refugees have also been reported to find some aspects of the U.S. culture unsatisfactory and to be strongly attached to Russian culture and have pride in the accomplishments of the USSR (Gold, 1992). By comparison, they find the United States less satisfactory in terms of friendships and culture (Flaherty, Kohn, Golbin, Gaviria, & Birz, 1986). Furthermore, Soviet Jewish refugees have experienced tension with the American Jewish community largely responsible for their resettlement. A central aspect of the American Jewish community's motivation in resettling these refugees was the expectation that they would assimilate into American Jewish life (Simon & Simon, 1982b). However, while these refugees do retain a strong sense of Jewish identity (Birman & Tyler, 1994; Gitelman, 1982; Simon & Simon, 1982b), it is secular in nature (Gold, 1992).

The differences in the social construction of what it means to be Jewish in the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. have resulted in conflict over religious socialization and limited participation in American Jewish organizations (Simon & Simon, 1982b). Further, the generosity of the Jewish community has in part been based on the hope that the new arrivals would fill the ranks of American Jewish community by joining their religious organizations and donating to Jewish

causes. However, many communities have felt disappointed in this regard because of the adherence to Russian (rather than Jewish religious) culture on the part of the refugees.

Issues In The Adaptation Of Soviet Jewish Refugees

Studies of Jewish refugees from the FSU have begun to outline a variety of issues and findings relevant to the overall adaptation to life in the United States. The following represent several important areas of consideration.

Acculturation, Psychological Adjustment, and Economic Success

Acculturation refers to the many process involved in adapting to a new country. A large literature suggests its importance to both psychological and economic outcomes for refugees. While overviews of this literature are found elsewhere (e.g. Moyerman & Forman, 1992), our prior work with refugees from the former Soviet Union (Birman, Trickett, & Vinokurov, in press; Vinokurov, Birman, & Trickett, 2000; Birman & Trickett, in press) suggests that degree of acculturation to both Russian and American culture is an important factor in both psychological and economic spheres. We thus focused on this important concept among working age adults.

Jewishness

Because of the differences between being Jewish in the former Soviet Union and being Jewish in the United States, we were also interested in assessing the degree to which these refugees both identified with and participated in the American Jewish community. This information is seen as being particularly relevant to those Jewish agencies that provide a number of resettlement services.

Employment Issues

In general, empirical literature shows a clear relationship between work status and adjustment in both non-immigrant and immigrant populations. It further suggests the importance of distinguishing between unemployment, underemployment, and employment in one's own professional field. With respect to unemployment, several studies of non-immigrants have found it to be a risk factor for various maladaptive outcomes including symptoms of depression (Shams & Jackson, 1994; Winefield, Winefield, Tiggermann, & Goldney, 1991; Kessler, Turner, & House, 1988; Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1991). Other studies link unemployment to physical health and psychological symptoms among refugee and immigrant populations. These include studies of Soviet Jewish immigrants in Israel (Zilber & Lerner, 1996) and the U.S. (Aroian, Norris, Patsdaughter, & Tran, 1998), East German immigrants in West Germany (Schwartzer, Jerusalem, & Hahn, 1994), Korean immigrants in the United States (Shin, 1993; Hurh & Kim, 1990), Southeast Asian refugees in Vancouver, Canada (Beiser, Johnson, & Turner, 1993), Puerto Rican immigrants in the United States (Canabal & Quiles, 1995), and Asian immigrants in England (Shams & Jackson, 1994).

Because refugees from the former Soviet Union are highly educated, professional status is particularly important for this population. Thus, both underemployment and the kind of employment they obtain in resettlement are important issues relating to adaptation. On one hand these refugees have significant resources, having a strong educational background. However, they are also at risk if their professional/economic situation is dramatically different than what they experienced prior to migration. For this population achieving comparable employment is seen as an indication of successful adaptation and as a component of self-esteem (Chiswick, 1993; Bernstein & Shuval, 1998; Markowitz, 1993; Gold, 1992). Resettlement programs, however, advocate early economic self-sufficiency. Thus, new arrivals are frequently offered jobs far below their level of training either because of poor English skills or lack of fit between their skills and the needs of the U.S. labor market. In this situation refugees may refuse entry level or menial labor jobs in the hopes that they can obtain better employment in the future.

Few data are available on the extent and implications of underemployment among Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union who resettled in the United States. Gold (1994) reported that only half of the refugees with professional, technical, and managerial occupations found first jobs in comparable areas of employment in the New York community. In a recent large-scale study of former Soviet immigrants in the Boston area, only 40% reported being employed full or part time (Aroian, Norris, Patsdaughter, & Tran, 1998). In a study of former Soviet refugees in New York and the Washington DC area, Vinokurov et al. (2000) found that only approximately 1/3 were employed in the same professional field as in the former FSU, about 1/3 were "underemployed", and almost 1/3 were unemployed. These studies suggest that a substantial number of émigré professionals in both countries of resettlement are underemployed.

With respect to the psychological impact of job status, Kats (1983) reported that downward mobility was negatively related to job satisfaction among a sample of 351 male Soviet Jewish immigrants in Israel. Furthermore, a four-year longitudinal study conducted by Bernstein and Shuval (1998) found that physicians from the former Soviet Union were more positive about their lives if they were working in their professional field. Overall, these studies suggest that employment in the same professional field after resettlement is important to refugees and may be related to their adjustment in the new culture. Thus, we spent considerable energy assessing the employment pattern of these refugees and its relation to economic and psychological well-being.

Community Context

Acculturation researchers have long noted the importance of the community context for the adaptation of immigrants and refugees (Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez, 1980; Birman, 1994). However there are few studies on the nature of community differences and their relation of community differences to work status as they pertain to the adaptation of Soviet refugees in the U.S.. Simon and Simon (1982b), in a study of Soviet immigrant adjustment in 14 cities, report that those living in Los Angeles were more likely to live in neighborhoods composed of other Soviet immigrants than in other cities. However, ethnic density did not have an impact on the immigrants' friendship patterns. Gold (1994) suggests that differences in employment of Soviet Jewish refugees across communities may be a function of the size of the city of resettlement itself, rather than ethnic density per se.

The two communities in Maryland with large number of refugee arrivals from the FSU are Baltimore City, with a few living in Baltimore and Howard Counties, and Montgomery County in suburban Washington DC. The two communities are quite different in several ways that may affect the experiences of refugees. The Baltimore community has accepted more refugees from the FSU and thus has greater ethnic density of new arrivals, with some neighborhoods being predominantly Russian-speaking, as well as apartment buildings where many refugee families reside in close proximity to one another. There are several stores selling Russian food, and 3 restaurants that are frequented by the Russian-speaking communities, particularly for various special occasions, such as birthdays, anniversaries, etc.. Thus, there are several community settings where refugees can interact and uphold aspects of their native culture. There are also radio and television stations that broadcast Russian language programming.

Further, Jewish refugees from the FSU have been resettled in Baltimore within the context of a long-standing tightly knit Baltimore Jewish community, which has many institutions, resources, and traditions. For example, at the local public high school in Pikesville, approximately 10-15% of the student body are recent refugees from the former Soviet Union, approximately 10% are African American, and the rest (75-80%) are predominantly American Jewish (Birman & Trickett, in press). This largely reflects the demographic composition of the surrounding community. Thus, these refugees are living in an ethnically dense enclave, situated within a Jewish American enclave.

The Washington D. C. community is smaller in absolute number and more geographically dispersed than the Baltimore community. Most of the refugees have resettled in Montgomery County, Maryland, through the Rockville JESSA, with supplemental services provided by programs at the local JCC. The agency estimates that approximately 4,500 refugees have been resettled, with the majority having arrived after 1988. Because the Russian-speaking community is relatively small and dispersed over a large geographical area, there is no formal or informal community focal point that brings the refugees together. There are no local Russian cable TV or radio channels, no local Russian language newspaper, and only three small Russian grocery stores, also dispersed throughout the area. Another indication of relative dispersion of this population is that in 1998 the County School system had only 157 Russian-speaking students enrolled in English for Students of Other Languages (ESOL) programs (D. Ekzarkhova, Montgomery County ESOL Office, personal communication, July, 1998), with the largest concentration of former Soviet students in any one high school being only 4% (Birman & Trickett, 2000). Further, the surrounding community is also multicultural, with many other ethnic groups including African Americans, Vietnamese, Chinese, Koreans, and others. Here the American Jewish Community is approximately 25% of the Montgomery County population.

The context of resettlement was also quite different. Baltimore resettled a relatively large number of Soviet Jews as early as the 1970's. Thus, by the 1990's, a large Russian-speaking community was in existence in Baltimore, and newer arrivals were adapting to life within this ethnic enclave, the American Jewish community, and the larger society. Further, the Baltimore Jewish community provided financial support for those being resettled, fully matching the Federal "matching grant" designated for financial assistance with housing, food, etc. during the first 4 months of resettlement. In Montgomery County, since 1990, one of the requirements of being resettled was to have a sponsor match the federal Matching Grant. As a result, a newly

arriving family had to have a sponsor willing to pay $2,500 for the head of a household and $500 for each additional family member. One implication of this is that those resettled in Montgomery County had potentially more resources in the sense that they had to have a relative willing and able to contribute economically. Further, these circumstances of resettlement likely led to somewhat different expectations of the resettlement service agencies.
The employment context in the two communities was also quite different, with Baltimore offering more blue-collar jobs, whereas Montgomery County offered the high technology corridor extending north from Washington D.C., as well as the NIH and other research institutes in Bethesda and the surrounding area. However, the two communities are relatively similar with respect to income levels, with both communities being middle class.

Taken as a group, these community differences suggest that the adaptation process, both psychologically and economically, may differ in the two communities. Thus, our research was intended to include sufficient numbers of adults in each of the two communities to make comparisons between them.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study built on this previous literature and focused on the overall adaptation of this group of refugees in two contrasting communities. It was based on the following specific questions.

Demographics

- Who are the refugees in this study, with respect to the former republic of origin, age and age of arrival, level of education, and other demographic information.

Acculturation

- How are these refugees acculturating to the American culture, and to what extent do they maintain acculturation/affiliation to Russian culture?

Jewish Acculturation

- To what extent do these refugees identify themselves as being Jewish, and participate in Jewish religious activities?
- How are these refugees integrating into the American Jewish community?

Social Integration

- To what extent are these refugees socializing with Americans and other Russian-speaking émigrés?

Social Support

- Who are the people in the lives of these refugees to whom they feel they can turn for support?

Psychological Adjustment

- How are refugees adapting psychologically in resettlement with respect to satisfaction with life, alienation from American culture, and psychological symptoms of depression and anxiety?

Economic Adjustment

- What are the occupational trajectories for the refugees?
- What sequence of jobs and additional training do most refugees undertake over time, both in general and in the two different communities?

Additional Education and Training

- What kinds of education and training in order to find employment did refugees receive after resettlement in the U.S., and did they find it helpful?

Resettlement Agency Experience

- How do the refugees describe and rate their satisfaction with their experience with the resettlement agencies that helped them?

METHOD

Sampling Strategy

With the support of MONA and relevant resettlement and community agencies we were able to develop a comprehensive list of refugees resettled in Montgomery County, and a partial list of refugees resettled in Baltimore during the relevant time periods. Because the focus of this study was adaptation of "working-age" adults, we selected those who were age 25-55 on arrival. We felt that adults younger than age 25 were still at an age when they could be students or new to the work force. On the other hand, adults over age 55 are considered a special group by resettlement agencies. Women over 55 are considered of retirement age in the FSU, and both men and women find it hard to gain entry into the labor market.

Communities

We developed a stratified random sample from these lists and supplemented it with individuals identified through a snowball technique. In Baltimore, because our lists were less complete, we attempted to target diverse neighborhoods and different occupational categories of refugees in order to assure that our sample was representative of the refugees living in the community. These individuals were contacted by telephone and Russian-speaking interviewers went to their homes to collect the data. Participants were asked to sign letters of informed consent and were paid for their participation. Our response rate was approximately 88%, and we believe that our samples are representative of refugees resettled in both communities in Maryland during the past 11 years. The total sample included 453 adults, 251 from Baltimore and 202 from Montgomery County.

Cohorts

In addition, to consider the impact of length of time spent in resettlement in greater depth, we divided the sample into three cohorts of arrival. For these analyses, we included only those refugees who had lived in the country 2 years or less (N=93), 4-6 years (N=152), and 8-11 years (N=156). By grouping respondents into these distinct categories, we hoped to capture issues, which characterize each of these periods in resettlement. We saw those who had lived in the U.S. less than 2 years as still experiencing the period of initial adjustment. The period between 4-6 represents an important point in time when refugees become eligible for citizenship and begin to study for their citizenship exam. The last cohort, those who have lived in U.S. for 8-11 years, represents those refugees who have lived a substantial portion of their lives in immigration and generally have settled in the new country. Cohort differences allow us to speculate about changes in acculturation and adaptation over time. However, without a longitudinal study, we cannot definitively conclude that differences observed between these groups did not exist prior to migration.

A description of the measures used is attached in Appendix I.

FINDINGS

For each set of findings we first provide a brief overview statement, followed by highlights and then tables presenting the findings in more detail. For each section, findings are presented for the whole adult sample and also for the different cohorts and communities, if there are cohort or community differences.

Please Note: In the tables, we use the following notation to signify statistically significant differences in the data: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$. NS is used when the difference is not significant, and + signifies a trend.

CHAPTER 1: Demographics (Table 1)

Based on descriptive information, it appears that our sample is comparable to other samples of former Soviet Jewish refugees collected in the U.S. (e.g. Simon & Simon, 1982b; Vinokurov, Birman, & Trickett, 2000) with respect to education, age, and former republic of origin.

Highlights – Whole Sample:

- **All study participants were either refugees or parolees**, with the vast majority (97%) having arrived with refugee status.
- **The largest percentage of study participants came from Ukraine,** followed by Russia and Belarus.
- **This is a very educated group, with almost 70% having a college degree or higher**, and none without a high school degree.

Highlights – Cohorts:

- Across these cohorts a larger percentage of refugees came from **Ukraine in the early 1990's** and a larger percentage from **Russia more recently**.
- The **percentage of those working increased with length of time in the country**.
- There were **no significant differences among cohorts in level of education**, though the means for those who arrived earlier were slightly higher than for new arrivals. Thus**, data do not support the general perception that newer arrivals are not as well educated as earlier cohorts**.

Highlights – Communities:

- In **Baltimore the greater percentage came from Ukraine** while in **Montgomery County the sample was divided equally between those coming from Ukraine and Russia**.
- The **Montgomery County sample was slightly better educated with a slightly higher current employment rate.**
- There **were no community differences with respect to gender, age of arrival, or length of time in the United States**.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

A. Demographics -- Whole Sample (N=453)	
Variable	**Percent or Mean**
Place of origin:	
Ukraine	43%
Russia	28%
Belarus	15%
Other	13%
Age	47
Age of Arrival	41
Length of Time in U.S.	6 Years
Education	
1) High School	5%
2) Technical School	22%
3) Partial College	4%
4) College	62%
5)Candidate/Doctoral Degree	7%
Gender	
Male	46%
Female	54%
Married	90%

B. Cohort Differences In Demographics				
Variables	**Cohorts – Length of Time in U.S. Means or Percent**			**Significance of Differences**
	<2 years (N=89)	4 – 6 years (N=149)	8-11 years (N=147)	
Place of origin:				
Ukraine	38%	44%	44%	
Russia	39%	25%	24%	
Belarus	4%	17%	21%	
Age	43. 5	46.3	49.6	21.18***
Age of Arrival	42.1	41.3	40.2	N.S.
Education				
1) High School	6%	3%	5%	N.S.
2) Technical School	25%	22%	15%	
3) Partial College	6%	3%	6%	
4) College	55%	63%	69%	
5)Candidate/Doctoral Degree	7%	9%	5%	

C. Community Differences in Demographics			
Variables	**Community Means or Percent**		**Significance of Differences**
	Baltimore N = 251	Montgomery Co. N = 202	
Place of Origin:			
Ukraine	47%	38%	
Russia	20%	38%	
Belarus	20%	9%	
Age	45.8	46.9	N.S.
Age of Arrival	40.3	40.8	N.S.
Length of residence in U.S.	5.45	6.14	4.88*
Education			
1) High School	5%	4%	7.6**
2) Technical School	27%	15%	
3) Partial College	5%	3%	
4) College	58%	67%	
5) Candidate/Doctoral Degree	4%	10%	

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Demographics

The sample appears comparable to other samples of former Soviet refugees, reflecting a high education among the refugees. The sample is also comparable to others in terms of the former republics of origin. There were slight differences between those resettled in Montgomery County and Baltimore with respect to level of education, former republic of origin, and length of residence in the U.S. Thus, any comparisons involving the two communities must take this into account, as differences in acculturation, adaptation, and employment trajectories may be due to the differences between these two groups on arrival, rather than differences that may have emerged as a result of having been resettled in these two different communities.

Finally, in contrast to the commonly held belief among service providers that more recent arrivals are less educated, this was not true in the present sample.

CHAPTER 2: Acculturation (Table 2)

The process of acculturation represents the overarching task of refugees in terms of their coming to grips with life in their new land. Acculturation refers to changes in behaviors, identification, values, language, and other aspects of one's culture as a result of migration to the new culture. We view acculturation as a complex process that involves both the new culture and the culture of origin (Birman, 1994). That is, refugees may acculturate to various aspects of the American culture while either retaining or shedding aspects of their culture of origin.

Highlights – Whole Sample:

- **The majority of respondents (58%) consider themselves more Russian than American overall**, and findings on the identity dimension of the "LIB" confirm that the overall sample retains a greater Russian than American identity (2.9 vs. 2.2 on a 4-point scale).

- **The greatest difference between level of American and Russian acculturation involves the area of language** (2.6 vs. 4.0).

Highlights – Cohorts:

- As expected, it appears that **American acculturation across the board is higher for those who have lived in the U.S. longer** with respect to language, identity, and behavior.
- However, there was **no decline in Russian language fluency or behavioral acculturation over time** for the refugees, and even in the 8-11 year cohort overall Russian acculturation remained higher than level of American acculturation.

- **The only change with respect to Russian acculturation was a slight decrease in the level of Russian identity**, and this change appears to be very gradual, with only the extreme groups (those here 2 years or less and those here 8-11 years) being significantly different from each other. The finding may also reflects the importance of the period of 5 years post-arrival with respect to being able to apply for citizenship, which may be related to a loss of Russian identity. It is possible that gaining citizenship is related to a loss of Russian identity.

Highlights – Communities:

- There was **no difference in level of American identity** between the two communities.
- The **Montgomery County sample shows greater American acculturation overall as well as greater language and behavioral acculturation**.
- There **is greater behavioral Russian acculturation in Baltimore**, suggesting that there are more opportunities to engage in Russian behaviors (stores, restaurants, other "Russians" living nearby) in the more ethnically dense community.
- However, there are **no differences in level of Russian identity or Russian language in the two communities**, suggesting that community of residence has less of an impact on these aspects of acculturation.

TABLE 2: ACCULTURATION

A. Dimensions of Acculturation On The "LIB" Acculturation Scale -- Whole Sample (N=453) (1=low level of acculturation, 4=high)		
	American Culture	**Russian Culture**
Language	2.6	4.0
Identity	2.2	2.9 ***
Behavioral	2.6	2.7 ***
Overall	2.5	3.2

B. Overall Identity - Whole Sample (N=453)	
Do you consider yourself:	
More Russian than American	58%
More American than Russian	4%
Equally Russian & American	29%
Neither	7%
Other	2%

C. Cohort Differences in Acculturation (1=not at all, 4=high)				
Variable	**Cohort – Length Of Time In U.S. Means**			**Significance of Differences**
	>2 years N=89	4 – 6 years N=149	8-11 years N=147	
Russian Language	3.97	3.98	3.99	N.S.
Russian Identity	3.13	2.85	2.67	5.92**
Russian Behavior	2.76	2.74	2.68	N.S.
Overall Russian Acculturation	3.29	3.19	3.11	5.75**
English Language	2.11	2.60	2.87	52.43***
American Identity	1.80	2.22	2.62	28.63***
American Behavior	2.27	2.62	2.73	26.62***
Overall American Acculturation	2.06	2.49	2.76	56.22***

D. Community Differences In Acculturation (1=not at all, 4=high)			
Variable	**Community Means**		**Significance of Differences**
	Baltimore N = 251	Montgomery Co. N = 202	
Russian Language	3.99	3.97	3.64+
Russian Identity	3.0	2.8	3.98*
Russian Behavior	2.8	2.6	18.57***
Overall Russian Acculturation	3.27	2.13	12.0***
English Language	2.4	2.8	27.69***
American Identity	2.2	2.3	N.S.
American Behavior	2.5	2.7	25.56***
Overall American Acculturation	2.4	2.6	18.4***

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Acculturation

Overall, refugees are strikingly more Russian than American oriented. Services provided to this group need to address this issues, particularly the fact that English language competence is not very high. Thus, it is likely that services to this population, even refugees who have lived in the U.S. for 10 years or longer, need to consider that these refugees remain very attached to Russian culture with respect to their identity, behavior, and language.

The differences in the two communities with respect to acculturation are perhaps most striking, with Baltimore refugees being more Russian-oriented and Montgomery county refugees being more American oriented on almost every measure of Russian and American acculturation. This suggests a different pattern of acculturation and adaptation in the two communities, as refugees appear to live quite different lives culturally. The implication of this is that refugee services need to be tailored to the nature of the local community – more ethnic ties and connections to Russian culture in Baltimore.

CHAPTER 3: Jewish Acculturation (Table 3)

In the introduction to our questionnaire we explained why we would be using the term "Russian" to refer to Soviet Jews. However, we are very aware of the importance of Jewishness both to this group and to the American Jewish community who has played such a central role in their resettlement. We wanted to document the extent to which refugees consider themselves Jewish, and ways in which they consider themselves Jewish.

Highlights – Whole Sample:

- **The majority (81%),** but not all, of those who have resettled in Maryland as Soviet Jewish refugees**, consider themselves Jewish.**
- **Being Jewish does not represent a religious affiliation for these refugees,** with only 1% indicating religion as the single reason they considered themselves Jewish. Similarly, **Jewish identity was rated as much higher than "behavioral acculturation/religious practices"** (3.3 vs. 1.8 on a 4-point scale).
- **For Jewish respondents, their sense of identity as Jews is stronger than their Russian identity** (2.8 Russian vs. 3.3 Jewish).
- **On the average Jewish respondents indicated that it is somewhat important but not very important** (2.7 on a 4 point scale) **for their children to grow up to be Jewish** in terms of their identity and religious participation (2.5 would suggest they were neutral about it).
- **Jewish respondents on average feel neutral in response to the question, "how much do you feel part of the American Jewish community"**, with a mean of 2.5 on a 4-point scale (the median of the scale, with 1 = not at all and 4 = very much).
- **Jewish respondents hold relatively positive perceptions of American Jews** with a mean rating of 3.7 on a 5-point scale.
- Jewish identity and behavioral acculturation were associated with American acculturation, suggesting that **as these Jewish refugees become more Americanized the stronger they feel about their Jewish identity and are more likely to engage in Jewish religious activities**.

Highlights – Cohorts:

- **Earlier arrivals are more likely to consider themselves Jewish, with the percentage dropping sharply from 92% in the 8-11 cohort, to 73% in the under 2 cohort.** This statistic is astounding in that over 1/4 of those resettled as Jewish refugees from FSU in the past 2 years do not even consider themselves Jewish. This observation confirms informal observations in resettlement that recent arrivals tend to be more ambivalent about immigrating, are more assimilated into Russian/Ukranian/Belorussian culture, and may be opting to immigrate for reasons other than persecution against Jews. However, without longitudinal data we cannot conclude definitively whether, as we suspect, arrivals today are less likely to be Jewish on arrival, or whether there is a tendency of people to acculturate to Jewish culture and be more likely to consider themselves as Jews over time.

- The **sense of Jewish identity and Jewish religious participation is strongest for the earlier cohort (8-11 yrs in U.S.)** than the later two cohorts.

Highlights – Communities:

- There were **no significant differences in the extent of Jewish identity or Jewish religious behavior** for those who consider themselves Jewish in the two communities.

TABLE 3: JEWISH ACCULTURATION

A. Jewish Acculturation - Whole Sample	
Do you consider yourself Jewish? Yes	367 (81%)
Reasons For Considering Oneself Jewish: Nationality/Ethnicity Religion Jewish Spouse Combination Of Reasons	 38% 1% 4% 47%
Jewish Identity (1=not at all, 4 = high)	3.3
Jewish Behavioral (Religious) Participation (1=not at all, 4=high)	1.8
How Much Feel Part of the American Jewish Community (1=Not at all, 4=Very much)	2.5
Perception of American Jews (1=negative, 5=positive)	3.6
Expect Children to be Jewish (1=not at all, 4=very much)	2.7

B. Correlates of Jewish Acculturation		
	Jewish Identity	**Jewish Behavior (Religious)**
Overall American Acculturation	.22**	.24**

C. Cohort Differences in Jewish Acculturation				
Variables	**Cohort – Length of Time In U.S. Means**			**Significance of Differences**
	> 2 years N=89	4 – 6 years N=149	8-11 years N=147	
Jewish Identity	3.20	3.13	3.46	6.40**
Jewish Behavioral (Religious) Participation	1.66	1.72	1.90	4.37*
How much feel part of American Jewish Community	2.29	2.37	2.69	4.47*

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Jewish Acculturation

Surprisingly 19% of the Jewish Soviet refugees do not consider themselves Jewish, and this percentage is even higher among the most recent arrivals (less than 2 years ago), with over 25% not considering themselves Jewish. This is startling for a group that receives refugee status on the basis of being Jewish. Presumably, those who do not consider themselves Jewish have arrived as Jewish refugees because they have a Jewish spouse. This confirms the anecdotal impression of Jewish Social Service Providers who have observed an increase in the number of mixed marriages in recent years.

At the same time, for those who DO consider themselves Jewish, the importance of Jewish identity is quite strong, and in fact, stronger than their Russian identity. However, their reasons for considering themselves Jewish are primarily NOT religious, with only 2% citing religion alone as the reason. Rather, for most this identification reflects either ethnicity/national origin, or a combination of reasons that may include religion. Thus is it very important for resettlement agencies to appreciate that while Jews from the FSU may not be religious, and may appear to be culturally Russian, their Jewish identity is extremely strong. Thus for those who consider themselves Jewish any suggestion that they are not "really" Jewish can be quite hurtful.

Finally, we observed no community differences in Jewish identity or Jewish religious participation between Montgomery County and Baltimore.

CHAPTER 4: Social Integration (Table 4)

To assess the extent to which these refugees are integrating socially into the surrounding American community, we asked them a few questions about their close social contact with other émigrés from the former Soviet Union, and with Americans.

Highlights – Whole Sample:

- **Of the people the refugees socialize with, the predominant majority (80%) are other former Soviets .**

Highlights – Cohorts:

- There was **no significant difference between cohorts with respect to percentage of Russians/Russian Jews in the social network** (over 80%).
- **There was a slight increase in the percentage of Americans/American Jews in the close social network**, with a significant difference only between the extreme groups: those who recently arrived (10%) and those in U.S. for 8-11 years (16%).

Highlights – Communities:

- There is a **higher percentage of Russians in the social network, and lower social integration with Americans in Baltimore**.

TABLE 4: SOCIAL INTEGRATION

A. Social Integration - Whole Sample (N=453)	
Question	**Mean Percent**
In the past 3 months, of the people you've **socialized** with outside of work, how many were:	
Russian/Russian Jews	77%
American/American Jews	17%
Of the families to whose house you've been **invited for dinner** within the past 3 months, how many were:	
Russian/Russian Jews	89%
American/American Jews	9%
Of your **closest friends**, how many are:	
Russian/Russian Jews	87%
American/American Jews	10%
% in total network (**mean of 3 items above**):	
Russian/Russian Jews	80%
American/American Jews	15%

B. Cohort Differences in Social Integration				
Variables	**Cohort – Length of Time In U.S. Mean Percent**			**Significance Of Differences**
	>2 years N=89	4 – 6 years N=149	8-11 years N=147	
% Russians in Network	83%	80%	80%	N.S.
% Americans in Network	10%	15%	15%	3.54*

C. Community Differences in Social Integration			
Variables	**Community Mean Percent**		**Significance of Differences**
	Baltimore N = 251	Montgomery Co. N = 202	
% Russians in Network	84%	76%	14.5***
% Americans in Network	12%	17%	10.8***

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Social Integration

The overwhelming majority of close personal relationships among these refugees is with other former Soviets, and the percentage in close social networks of former Soviets does not appear to decline even after 8-11 years of residence in the country. However, the percentage of Americans in close social networks does increase slightly. This suggests that other former Soviets remain extremely important in refugee social networks even after passage of time, but American become increasingly more important. The implication of these findings is that it is important in resettlement to appreciate the importance of other fellow refugees, and perhaps to engage them in the resettlement process for new arrivals.

Community differences were observed, with refugees in Montgomery County having more Americans and fewer Russians than refugees in Baltimore in their close social networks. This suggests that the nature of community of resettlement has an impact on the extent of social integration of new arrivals, and we might expect that being resettled in an ethnic enclave will mean slightly less social integration into the American community.

CHAPTER 5: Social Support (Table 5)

The study explored which sources of social support were most important in refugees' lives. To do so, we assessed the degree of social support they experienced with a variety of people at home, in the workplace, and in the neighborhood in the past 3 months.

Highlights – Whole Sample:

- **The greatest support comes from fellow refugees**, including spouse, family living with the participant, relatives, and Russian friends. Significantly lower are American friends, work colleagues, and, lastly, neighbors.

Highlights – Cohorts:

- Refugees **who have lived in U.S. longer report greater support from Russian friends**, with those who have been here 2 years or less receiving significantly less support from Russian friends than the other two groups. This suggests that it may take time for refugees to develop and strengthen friendship with other refugees.

- Refugees **who've lived in U.S. longer report greater support from American friends**, and this increase is gradual over the cohorts. However, the mean satisfaction with those relationships is **substantially lower than satisfaction with support from Russian friends**.

Highlights – Communities:

- Both **spouses and relatives were rated as more supportive in Baltimore than in Montgomery County**. While such a finding suggests more supportive relationships among Soviet Jews in Baltimore, it may reflect the possibility that the more Russian-oriented network found there must be more relied upon when support is needed. Also, it may reflect the observation made anecdotally in the resettlement community that more Baltimore refugees live in the context of large extended families, situated within a Russian-speaking ethnic enclave.

TABLE 5: SOCIAL SUPPORT

A. Social Support, Whole Sample (N=453) (1= no support, 3 = a great deal)	
Support received from:	**Means**
Spouse	2.8
Family Living with you	2.7
Russian Friends	2.5
Relatives	2.3
Colleagues	1.8
American Friends	1.7
Neighbors	1.4

B. Cohort Differences in Social Support (1= no support, 3 = a great deal)				
Variables	**Cohort – Length of Time In U.S. Means**			**Significance Of Differences**
	>2 years N=89	4 – 6 years N=149	8-11 years N=147	
Russian Friends	2.3	2.5	2.6	6.39**
American Friends	1.5	1.7	1.9	13.51***
Relatives	2.3	2.2	2.4	3.34*

C. Community Differences in Social Support (1= no support, 3 = a great deal)			
Variables	**Community Means**		**Significance of Differences**
	Baltimore N = 251	Montgomery Co. N = 202	
Spouse	2.91	2.82	3.83*
American friends	1.65	1.90	13.23***

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Social Support

Most support for these refugees comes from family and Russian friends. Refugees do not seem to rely as much on American friends. Since refugees are most likely to turn to other refugees (relatives and friends) for assistance and support, it may be useful for programs to find ways to enhance and build on these relationships to provide support for newly arrived refugees, by engaging other refugees in the resettlement process.

With respect to cohort differences, it appears that support from both Russian and American friends increases with length of time in the U.S., suggesting that friendships with members of both cultural groups grow stronger over time. In addition, a pattern suggesting that support from relatives significantly increases from the 4-6 cohort to the 8-11 cohort suggests that relationships with relatives also grow stronger over time. This contradicts the intuitive assumption made in resettlement that fellow refugees and relatives provide the greatest support to the new arrivals, but decline in importance as time goes on. Rather, it appears that these members of the social networks become MORE important for those who've lived in U.S. longer.

With respect to community differences, it appears that Montgomery County residents find their American friends to be more supportive than refugees in Baltimore, again highlighting one of the possible differences between living in an ethnic enclave (Baltimore) and being relatively geographically dispersed, making it more likely that relationships with Americans will be more important. Further, Baltimore residents rated their spouse as being more supportive than residents of Montgomery County, suggesting a greater reliance on close family in that community.

CHAPTER 6: Psychological Adjustment (Table 6)

We were interested in how these refugees were coping psychologically with being in a new country. We assessed three aspects of their psychological adjustment: the degree of alienation from this country they experienced, their level of psychological distress, and their overall life satisfaction.

Highlights – Whole Sample:

- **The refugees appear to feel only slightly alienated from the American culture overall,** where on a 4-point scale with 1 being low and 4 being high the mean for the sample is 2.2 (with 2.5 being the midpoint for the scale).

- **The refugees seem to be experiencing a relatively low level of psychological distress,** with the sample mean on the Hopkins Symptom Checklist being 1.7 (on a 4-point scale, with 1 representing low and 4 high prevalence of symptoms

- **The refugees appear to be relatively satisfied with life,** with mean life satisfaction being 3.7 on a 5 point scale, suggesting a generally positive rating.

Highlights – Cohorts:

- **Life satisfaction appears to improve over time**.

- There appears to be a **decline in alienation experienced over time**.

Highlights – Communities:

- **Alienation was slightly lower in Montgomery County**.

Highlights - Predictors of Psychological Adjustment:

To identify which of the variables in the study (length of residence in the U.S., community of resettlement, educational background, age of arrival, gender, marital status, English language competence and acculturation, Socioeconomic status of current job and satisfaction with current job, Socioeconomic status of the job held in FSU, Satisfaction with services received from the resettlement agency) were most important in predicting psychological adjustment, we conducted analyses that allowed us to examine the unique contributions of these variables to the three aspects of psychological adjustment considered: life satisfaction, symptoms of psychological distress, and alienation. In other words, when two variables are strongly related to each other (such as job satisfaction and SEI status of current job), both of these variables may be related to psychological adjustment. However, these analyses reveal which of these inter--related variables is the stronger predictor of adjustment.

The results were as follows:

- **Life Satisfaction:** The significant predictors were marital status (married were more satisfied), higher socioeconomic status (SEI) level of current job, greater American acculturation, and greater satisfaction with the resettlement agency.

- **Symptoms of Psychological Distress (Hopkins symptom checklist):** Greater distress was predicted by being female, being single, having a higher level of education, being in the US a longer time, resettling in Baltimore, and having higher occupational prestige in the former Soviet Union. Reduced symptoms were associated with English language competence and job satisfaction.

- **Alienation:** Alienation appears to increase with time in U.S., Russian acculturation, and socioeconomic status of job (SEI) held in FSU. Reduced alienation is associated with greater American acculturation and current SEI code. Males reported more alienation than females.

TABLE 6: PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT

A. Psychological Adjustment -- Whole Sample (N=453)	
Variables	**Mean**
Psychological Distress (1=not distressing, 4=extremely)	1.7
Life Satisfaction (1=low, 5=high)	3.7
Alienation (1=low, 4=high)	2.2

B. Cohort Differences in Psychological Adjustment				
Variables	**Cohort – Length of Time In U.S. Means**			**Significance of Differences**
	<2 years N=89	4 – 6 years N=149	8-11 years N=147	
Psychological Distress (1=low, 4=high)	1.66	1.65	1.70	N.S.
Life Satisfaction (1=low, 5=high)	3.43	3.65	3.85	14.55***
Alienation (1=low, 4=high)	2.27	2.22	2.09	3.76*

C. Community Differences in Psychological Adjustment			
Variables	**Community Means**		**Significance of Differences**
	Baltimore N = 251	Montgomery Co. N = 202	
Psychological Distress (1=low, 4=high)	1.7	1.7	N.S.
Life Satisfaction (1=low, 5 = high)	3.7	3.8	3.6+
Alienation (1=low, 4=high)	2.3	2.1	10.8***

D. Predictors Of Psychological Adjustment				
Dependent Variable	**N (Df)**	**R^2**	**Significant Predictors**	***Beta***
Life Satisfaction	390 (14, 376)	.38***	Marital Status SEI of current Job Overall American Acculturation Satisfaction with Resettlement Agency Services	.21*** .16** .28*** .11* .31***
Hopkins Symptom Checklist	396 (14, 382)	.25***	Gender Marital Status Level of Education Time in U.S. Community English Language Competence SEI Code of Profession in FSU Job Satisfaction	.10* -.10* -.19** .19*** .10* -.21* .22*** -.11+
Alienation	395 (13, 382)	.47***	Gender Time in U.S. Overall Russian Acculturation Overall American Acculturation English Language Competence SEI code in FSU Current SEI Code	.08* .17*** .13** -.62*** .15* .08+ -.11**

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Psychological Adjustment

It appears that the refugees are making a good adjustment in the sense of being relatively free of symptoms of psychological distress, relatively satisfied with life, and reporting a relatively low level of alienation from life in the U.S. There is considerable variability among them in terms of these psychological outcomes, suggesting that it is important to provide relevant services designed to increase overall comfort in the new country.

Analyses were conducted to "predict" psychological adjustment, by considering which of the many possible factors that are related to good adjustment in this life sphere is the most important in identifying those most likely to be well adjusted, and those most at risk for maladjustment. To explore this question, multivariate analyses were conducted to predict life satisfaction, alienation, and presence of psychological symptoms (mostly anxiety and depression).

The analyses suggest that, not surprisingly, those who hold a high status job currently, are satisfied with the assistance received from resettlement agency, are highly acculturated to American culture and are married appear to be more satisfied with life. Similarly, the data suggest that those who are highly acculturated to Russian culture are more alienated from the American culture – a finding that is not surprising.

Further, other variables were identifying as potentially putting refugees at risk for psychological maladjustment. Women appear to be more at risk than men for both alienation and psychological symptoms (of anxiety and depression).

Moreover, both alienation and psychological distress appear INCREASE with length of residence in the U.S. in these analyses, when the effects of other variables (education, age, gender, acculturation, etc.. have been accounted for).

Finally, the high status of job held in FSU is a risk factor in predicting psychological distress.

Taken together, these findings suggest that resettlement agencies need to attend to the special needs of refugees who were high level professionals in their country of origin, as they may have special needs not addressed by general resettlement processes. Further, the resettlement system needs to appreciate the possibility that for some refugees psychological distress and alienation may INCREASE with time in U.S., making it important to consider putting into place programs that can assist them at later stages of the resettlement process.

CHAPTER 7: Economic Adjustment (Table 7)

The importance of the work experience was central to our inquiry not only because of its importance in terms of resettlement policy but also because of the varying controversies around it with this population. For example, as a quite educated group there are debates about whether or not it makes sense to push them into a job unrelated to their prior educational training and area of specialization. We gathered extensive data on the work histories of these participants, the degree to which their jobs approximated the kinds of work they had done in the former Soviet Union, their current job satisfaction, and the degree to which their current employment was worse than, equal to, or better than their positions before resettlement.

As a gross comparison of the difference in job status as a function of immigration, we coded both the current job held in the U.S. and the job these refugees held in the former Soviet Union using the same measure. We are quite aware that the status of jobs in the two countries are not strictly equivalent and that these calculations suffer from that possibility. For example, doctors occupy a relatively lower status in the Former Soviet Union than doctors do in the U.S. Nonetheless, being a physician in the former Soviet Union should hold more status than being a physician's assistant.

Highlights - Whole Sample:

- **The percentage who work is very high (91%)** and spans a variety of jobs, though **computer programming represents the most frequent occupation**.
- Importantly, **only 25% of the sample is working in the same specialty as in the former Soviet Union** and 40% indicate that their current position is not at all like their position in FSU.
- In terms of relative status of their current jobs compared to their positions in the former Soviet Union**, 48% reported that the status of their current job was worse,** 23% that it was comparable, **and 29% that it was better.**
- On the other hand, **the average job satisfaction in their current positions is 3.3 on a 5** point scale where 5 represents high satisfaction.
- **The average Socioeconomic Index (SEI) rating of the jobs held before immigration was slightly over 73, compared to an average of 50 for current jobs held in the U.S.** The score of 73 would include would include such professions as librarian, forestry scientist, manager in health, and manager in marketing in the U.S. An SEI score of 50 on the other hand, would include positions such as physician's assistant, health technician, and recreation worker.

- The average time in each job ranges from 1.6 to 1.1 years, with the first 2 jobs being held the longest.

- **With respect to the employment trajectory,** in general, **the SEI code representing the job status grows with each successive job.** In addition, each successive job brings them, as a group, somewhat closer to the work they did in the former Soviet Union.

- With respect to how the job was found, **the resettlement agency plays a decreasing role and individual self-reliance an increasing role with each successive job.** Russian friends remain an important resource in finding new jobs both for new arrivals (27%) as well as those moving into jobs #5 and 6 (30% and 22%, respectively).

- **The majority of the refugees (71% in job #6) continue to have other "Russians" as colleagues on their job**, suggesting that social networks among them may be an important factor in finding work.

Highlights – Cohorts:

- **Both the percent of individuals employed and the degree to which that employment is in the same specialty as in FSU increases with length of time in the country.** Even 8-11 years after immigration, however, only a third of the participants are working in their specialty and **only 28% reported having the exact same job as in the former Soviet Union.**

- Those in the country the longest amount of time reported that the **main reason they were not working in their specialty was because they could not find an appropriate job**.

Highlights – Communities:

- **SEI codes for the current job in Montgomery County are considerably higher than those in Baltimore County**.

- With respect to the job trajectory, for the **first three jobs refugees in Montgomery County surpass those in Baltimore County in terms of job status (SEI)**.

- Also, it appears that refugees in Baltimore hold these jobs for a longer period of time. **In Montgomery County, refugees move into new jobs sooner, suggesting a more rapid upward mobility**.

- **In each of the first three jobs Montgomery County refugees report that it is closer to their positions in the former Soviet Union** than do Baltimore County refugees.

- The **resettlement agency in Baltimore was more important than in Montgomery County with finding the first job**, though in both communities it provided the greatest help of all the sources listed.

<u>Highlights – Predictors of Economic Adjustment</u>:

To examine what factors are most important in predicting positive adaptation on the job, as measured by job satisfaction and prestige/status of job held, multiple regression analyses were conducted. Only those who are currently employed were included in these analyses. In addition, in predicting SEI of current job, we excluded those who were still in their first job in order to be able to assess the potential effect of the status of one's first job after resettlement on status of later (current) jobs.

- **Job Satisfaction:** Those with greater job satisfaction had a higher current SEI code, higher level of American acculturation, and were more satisfied with services received from the resettlement agency. The following variables did not contribute significantly to job satisfaction: gender, current age, age of arrival in U.S., length of residence in the U.S., highest level of education completed, marital status, community of residence (Baltimore or Montgomery County), SEI code of job held in FSU, Russian Acculturation, and English language competence.

- **SEI of current job:** Those with higher current job status (level of SEI) had a higher level of education in the former Soviet Union, earlier age of arrival, greater length of time in the US, lived in Montgomery County, had a higher status first job in the United States, and had greater English language competence. The following variables did not contribute significantly to SEI of current job: gender, marital status, age, SEI code of job in FSU, Russian acculturation, American Acculturation, and satisfaction with resettlement agency services.

TABLE 7: ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT

A. Most Frequently Held Current Jobs In U.S. For Refugees In Current Sample			
Current Job Held By Field/Industry	**N**	**%**	**SEI Code**
Programming:			
Programmer / Senior Programmer	80	18%	76.31 – 83.65
Office work:			
Clerk	19	4%	31.35 – 37.72
Customer Service Representative	11	2%	40.18
Health occupations:			
Health aid	13	3%	29.29 – 36.51
Medical Assistant	12	3%	36.51 – 52.45
Accounting:			
Accountant Assistant	9	2%	37.95
Accountant	7	2%	76.43
Labor/construction:			
Assembler / Laborer	20	5%	26.72 – 37.29
Sales:			
Salesperson	11	2%	33.87
Cashier	9	2%	33.06
Driver:			
Taxi/Truck/other	17	4%	33.21 – 38.40
Teaching:			
Teacher	10	2%	79.9 – 80.24
Teacher's Aid	7	2%	36.92
Technical/engineering/mechanical:			
Auto mechanic/Mechanic	18	4%	32.28 – 45.29
Technician	16	4%	47.04 – 66.08
Engineer	9	2%	86.64 – 93.04
Maintenance Worker	7	2%	38.22
Other	141	29%	
Unemployed	37	8%	
TOTAL	453	100%	

B. Aspects of Employment - Whole Sample (N=453)	
Currently employed	91%
Working in same specialty as in FSU	25%
SEI Code of FSU Job	73.43
SEI Code of Current Job	50.43
Satisfaction with current job (1 not at all, 5 very)	3.34
Closeness of current job to Specialty in FSU	
Exactly	20%
Not at all	42%
Mean (1 exactly, 5 not at all)	3.4
Why not working in same specialty	
Unable to find work	52%
Wanted to re-specialize	22%
Other	26%
Status of current job as compared to job in FSU	
Worse than FSU	49%
Same as in FSU	22%
Better than FSU	28%
Are there other émigrés from FSU in the organization where you work? Yes	72%

C. Employment Trajectory						
	JOB 1	**JOB 2**	**JOB 3**	**JOB 4**	**JOB 5**	**JOB 6**
N	419	292	174	87	43	21
SEI code	40.8	47.4	55.4	57.1	60.7	65.6
Ave time at job (IN YEARS)	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.2	1.3	1.1
How close is job to specialty in FSU (1=exactly, 5=not at all)	4.1	3.7	3.5	3.2	3.2	2.6
HOW FOUND JOB:						
Private Employment Agency	2%	5%	5%	2%	0%	0%
Resettlement Agency	41%	21%	14%	8%	0%	0%
Russian Friends	27%	33%	29%	25%	30%	22%
American friends	5%	7%	3%	10%	13%	11%
Self/newspaper	21%	27%	44%	46%	56%	67%
Other	5%	7%	6%	10%	0%	0%
Other émigrés there? Yes	67%	64%	65%	56%	57%	71%

D. Cohort Differences In Employment				
	Cohort – Length of Time In U.S. Means			Significance of Differences
	< 2 years N=89	4 – 6 years N=149	8-11 years N=147	
Job Satisfaction (1=low, 5=high)	3.02	3.37	3.58	10.02***
SEI of Current Job	40.27	49.95	56.99	16.86***
SEI of FSU Job	69.20	73.83	75.46	2.37+
SEI of First Job	35.45	39.59	43.95	6.66***

E. Community Differences In Employment			
	Community Means		Significance of Difference (F)
	Baltimore N=179	Montgomery Co. N= 165	
Employed	87%	96%	
Working in Same Specialty as in FSU	19%	31%	
SEI Code of Current Job	45.3	58.1	37.03 ***
SEI Code of First Job	36.6	46.6	32.08 ***
SEI of FSU Job	71.8	74.5	N.S.
Job Satisfaction (1 not at all, 5 very)	3.2	3.6	16.48 ***

F. Community Differences in Job Trajectory

	Balt.	M.C.	Balt.	M.C.	Balt.	M.C.
	JOB 1		JOB 2		JOB 3	
N	223	196	151	145	82	92
SEI code	36.2	46.0	42.9	52.2	49.9	60.3
Avg. time at job (in years)	1.8	1.5	1.9	1.4	1.5	1.5
How close is job to specialty in FSU (1=exactly, 5=not at all)	4.2	4.0	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.4
HOW FOUND JOB…						
Private Employment Agency	3%	1%	3%	8%	2%	7%
Resettlement Agency	45%	36%	21%	22%	23%	6%
Russian Friends	27%	27%	38%	28%	23%	35%
American friends	3%	6%	6%	8%	0%	6%
Self/newspaper	16%	26%	26%	28%	46%	42%
Other	6%	3%	6%	8%	7%	6%

G. Predictors of Economic Adjustment

Dependent Variable	N (Df)	R^2	Significant Predictors	*Beta*
Job Satisfaction	398 (12,386)	.35***	Current SEI code	.43***
			American Acculturation	.17*
			Satisfaction with resettlement agency	.11*
Current SEI Code	393 (12,260)	.52***	Age	-.19***
			Education in FSU	.24***
			Time in US	.16**
			Community	.14**
			SEI Code of Job 1	.27***
			English Language Competence	.30***

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Economic Adjustment

The area of employment represents one of the greatest areas of readjustment for these refugees and finding work that takes advantage of their existing training and skills is problematic. **Almost half of the refugees report the prestige/status of their current job to be worse than that held in the former Soviet Union and few (25%) have been able to find employment in their field**. However, the level of satisfaction with their current job is better than neutral, suggesting that the **refugees have a somewhat positive perspective on their current employment situation**.

It appears that **the employment situation does get better for refugees over time**. However, a large number of refugees have still not attained high satisfaction or comparable status to the job they had had in the FSU even after 8 years in the U.S. **Thus, refugees continue to have needs with respect to job placement and re-training for a long time following resettlement.**

The economic adaptation does appear to improve as refugees change jobs. A surprising aspect of these findings is that even those who are in their 5th and 6th jobs, and correspondingly in increasingly higher status occupations, are employed in organizations where there are other employees from the former Soviet Union. With respect to how refugees find work, the role of Russian friends appears relatively undiminished (still 22% for job #6), while the role of American friends increases only slightly. This suggests that at least to some extent, **it appears that occupational achievement for these refugees involves relying on their ethnic networks, rather than becoming more involved with Americans**. One of the implications of this is that resettlement agencies need to consider ways of involving other refugees (perhaps those resettled earlier) in their efforts to help newer arrivals with job placement.

It appears that refuges in Baltimore are not as successful with respect to status (SEI code) of their employment as refugees in Montgomery County, they start out in lower level positions, and do not progress as quickly or as high with respect to future positions. This may be due to the fact that refugees that resettle in Baltimore are slightly less well educated and held slightly lower positions in FSU, or it may be due to the local labor markets in the two locations.

With respect to predictors of economic adaptation, we considered a range of factors that can be helpful in identifying those who are most likely to adapt well with respect to employment, in terms of the level of status/prestige of the job they currently hold, and their satisfaction with that job.

Of the important variables that emerged in predicting economic/employment adaptation, **the socioeconomic index (SEI) of the first job held was an important predictor of current SEI code**, controlling for other possible factors such as level of education, community of residence, English language competence, and status of job in the former Soviet Union. This suggests that when agencies place refugees in jobs upon arrival, it is important to try to place them in as high a status as job as possible. The belief that the first job is irrelevant, and is just a temporary

stepping stone to higher occupational success is not altogether correct.
On the other hand, **length of residence in the U.S. predicted higher SEI coded**, suggesting that the first job is not irrelevant, but even for those who start in lower SEI jobs the situation improves over time.

In addition, **higher level of education in FSU, earlier age of arrival, and English language competence were important predictors of higher SEI job codes**.

Finally, **living in Montgomery County (while taking into account all the other variables, such as level of education, age of arrival, etc.), emerged as a predictor of higher levels of SEI**.

Taken together, these results point to the importance of helping refugees obtain as high a level job as possible upon arrival, continuing strong efforts at English language training, and reassuring them that over time the economic situation does improve. However, it is also important to note that in this as well as other studies, approximately 1/3 of the respondents indicate that their current employment situation is worse than what they had in the former Soviet Union and very few are able to find employment exactly comparable to what they had before. Finally, it is explore why refugees in Montgomery County appear more successful at employment than refugees in Baltimore, in order to identify ways to better assist these refugees make the transition into the U.S. labor force.

CHAPTER 8: Additional Education and Training in U.S. (Table 8)

In addition to extensive information about job satisfaction and job history we inquired about the nature and extent of training they received after coming to the United States.

Highlights:

- **Almost all (91%) attended English classes** and almost two thirds of them found it helpful in terms of finding a job.
- **Only 14% stated that they took an exam to receive a license to maintain work in their own field.**
- **Almost half the sample attended job club (44%)**. The overwhelming majority came from Montgomery County (88%) and they found it much more useful than did those in Baltimore.
- **30% obtained various kinds of re-specialization** training to find jobs in a variety of different field, with the most frequent type of additional training being **computer programming** (28%). **The majority (62%) stated additional training helped find work**.

TABLE 8: ADDITIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN U.S.

A. English Classes N (%)	
Number who attended English classes	**Where they helpful in finding work?**
410 (91%)	Yes: 252 (60%)

B. Taking Exams for a right/license to work in own field. N (%)	
Took an exam for a right/license to work in own field	**Did you then start to work in your own specialty?**
60 (14%)	Yes: 42 (78%)

C. Job Club N (%)		
Attended Job Club:		**How helpful was it?** (1=not at all, 5=very much)
Baltimore	25 (10%)	2.2
Montgomery County	177 (88%)	3.3
Total	202 (44%)	3.2

D. Additional Educational Experiences to Receive Training in a Different Field (N=136)	
Most frequently taken courses:	**Frequency (%)**
Programming course	38 (28%)
Computer course	25 (18%)
Medical billing/office assistant courses	16 (12%)
Accounting course	8 (6%)
College courses, unspecified	4 (3%)
Other	45 (33%)
Total	136 (100%)
Did it help you find a job?	Yes: 62 (30%)

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Additional Education and Training in U.S.

It appears that additional education and training, particularly re-training in a new specialty is very important for economic adjustment of the refugees, with almost 1/3 of the sample having received such additional courses. Thus, it is important for resettlement services to consider offering such courses or finding ways of directing refugees to such courses. In the current labor market, it appears that computer/programming training has been particularly helpful. Overall, the majority (62%) of those who retrained found it useful in finding work.

English language classes were attended by the vast majority of the refugees (91%) and were found to be extremely helpful, suggesting that this is an extremely important and effective component of the resettlement program.

Those who attended job club were predominantly from Montgomery County, presumably job club having been available only rarely in Baltimore, and those who attended it there found it more useful than in Baltimore. This may be an important component to include in services offered to new arrivals.

CHAPTER 9: Resettlement Agency Experience (Table 9)

We asked about the extent to which the resettlement agencies helped them with various aspects of resettlement (on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being most helpful) and asked them to assess the way they were treated by the resettlement staff (also on a scale of 1-5)

Highlights – Whole Sample:

- **Overall, refugees report that the resettlement agency was somewhat helpful to them** (average = 3.2 on a 5-point scale, equivalent to a "C" grade) when they first arrived.
- Refugees reported that **they received the greatest amount of help with respect to studying English and getting medical insurance.**
- **The least helpful areas involved obtaining help with family problems getting transportation.**
- **With respect to finding a job, the rating of helpfulness was 2.9,** suggesting moderate amount of satisfaction.
- **Overall refugees were relatively satisfied with how they were treated by resettlement staff.**

Highlights – Communities:

- **Satisfaction with services and agency were substantially and significantly higher in Montgomery County**.

TABLE 9: RESETTLEMENT AGENCY EXPERIENCE

A. Satisfaction With Help Received From Resettlement Agency	
When you arrived, how much did the resettlement agency help you with:	**Means** (1 not at all, 5 very much)
Obtaining food stamps	3.7
Studying English	3.6
Getting medical insurance	3.5
Finding a free doctor	3.5
Learning about laws/norms of behavior at work	3.5
Learning about laws/norms of behavior in society	3.5
Learning about laws/norms of behavior at home	3.3
Getting a free loan	3.1
Moral support	3.1
Finding a job	2.9
Finding housing	2.7
Dental care assistance	2.6
Obtaining SSI	2.5
Family problems	2.1
Getting transportation	1.9
Overall Mean	**3.2**

B. Satisfaction With Resettlement Agency Staff	
In general, I think the resettlement agency staff:	**Means** (1 not at all, 5 very much)
Treated me (my family) well	4.1
Were attentive and kind	4.0
Overall satisfaction with the help you received	3.9
Understood the situation I was in	3.9
Provided adequate services in Russian	3.8
Overall Mean	**3.9**

C. Community Differences in Resettlement Agency Experience			
Variable	**Community Means**		**Significance of Differences**
	Baltimore N = 251	Montgomery Co. N = 202	
Satisfaction with *Services* from Resettlement Agency **Overall Mean** (1=low, 5 = high)	3.0	3.5	26.76***
Satisfaction with *Resettlement Agency Staff* **Overall Mean** (1-low, 5=high)	3.7	4.2	20.56***

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Resettlement Agency Experience

While it appears that the refugees experience the way they are treated by the resettlement agency staff positively (a rating of 3.9 on a 5 point scale, roughly equivalent to a grade of "B"), the services they provide are rated as somewhat helpful (3.2 on a 5-point scale, closer to a grade of "C"). Only in two areas -- assistance with obtaining food stamps and studying English – the agencies were rated as better than that, above the median of the scale (greater than 3.5). This suggests that agencies can explore ways to improve assistance for these refugees.

In addition, it appears that refugees were significantly more satisfied with the helpfulness of the services received and the way they were treated by the resettlement agency staff in Montgomery County than in Baltimore. It is impossible to determine whether this difference reflects a "real" difference in the type and style of services delivered, or if the tendency of the population in Baltimore, who appear not to be adjusting as well as refugees in Montgomery County, is to rate all aspects of resettlement more negatively.

CONCLUSION

This report has provided an overview of the lives of refugee adults from the former Soviet Union, living in two different counties, and arriving in the country since 1989. While our report covered various domains of the experience of this group, the work arena stands out as critical in their overall adjustment to life in the United States. The picture is in some ways very positive, in that most are employed, steadily improving from job to job, and relatively free of psychological worries and alienation from the broader U.S. culture. Still, the issue of job comparability between here and the former Soviet Union remains as a powerful factor influencing their relative well-being and job satisfaction.

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